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LOVE

THE *DGAF*
SUPERSTAR
FINALLY
DROPS HER
GUARD

Reviews

Music

TAYLOR REMAKES A CLASSIC

Swift's rerecording of 'Red' finds new depth, power, and wisdom in a landmark album

By ROB SHEFFIELD



Taylor Swift

Red (Taylor's Version)

REPUBLIC

★★★★★

EVER SINCE Taylor Swift announced she was dropping *Red (Taylor's Version)*, remaking her 2012 classic, anticipation has run high. But since she specializes in doing the impossible, here's yet another insane idea she's brought to life: the new *Red* is even bigger, glossier, deeper, casually crueler. It's the ultimate version of her most gloriously ambitious megapop manifesto.

Red is the second chapter of her Taylor's Version project, after *Fearless*, redoing her old albums even though she's hitting her fiercest creative peak right now. Nothing on this scale has been tried before. This is a leap, even from the girl who invented the whole concept of "Never looking down." ➔

ILLUSTRATION BY
Mercedes deBellard

➔ TAYLOR SWIFT

The showstopper: her long-lost 10-minute version of “All Too Well.” Swift takes her own masterpiece, tears it all up, and rebuilds it into a new heartbreak epic, twice as long and twice as mad. In other words, her greatest song just got greater. It’s beyond belief she didn’t release this until now. But it’s beyond belief it even exists. “All Too Well (10 Minute Version)” is the climax for *Red (Taylor’s Version)* – the original 16-song *Red* plus B sides and vault outtakes, all redone with more boom and detail in the production.

Red used to be her greatest album – at least until *Folklore* and *Evermore* came along. It’s where she proved herself not just the supreme pop songwriter of her generation, but one of the all-timers. *Red* wasn’t her first masterwork, but it’s the one that established the Swiftian universe as a place where every lost scarf is a ticking time bomb that can take years to explode into a song.

The challenge of *Red (Taylor’s Version)* was how to remake an unimprovable original. Hidden gems like “I Almost Do” or “Sad Beautiful Tragic” would be career highlights for nearly anyone else, but here they’re overshadowed by even loftier tunes. As on *Fearless*, her adult voice adds new power to these songs. “Nothing New” is the prize of the vault songs – a duet with kindred spirit Phoebe Bridgers, asking, “How can a person know everything at 18 but nothing at 22?” Can we get a Taylor-Phoebe album?

Swift finally does her own proper studio versions of “Better Man” and “Babe,” country hits she gave away to other artists. “Message in a Bottle” and “The Very First Night” go for dance-pop zing. She teams up with Ed Sheeran for “Run,” an acoustic duet written the day they met. “I Bet You Think About Me” is a rowdy country duet with Chris Stapleton, baiting a posh ex about his “organic shoes” and “cool indie-music concerts.” It’s the kind of Nashville hit she was about to leave behind, with her twang on display.

But that’s the amazing thing about *Red (Taylor’s Version)* – it’s a tribute to how far she’s traveled, yet it makes you even more excited for where she’s heading next. This is the golden age of something good and right and real. And for Swift, the golden age is really just beginning. **R**



Díaz

BREAKING

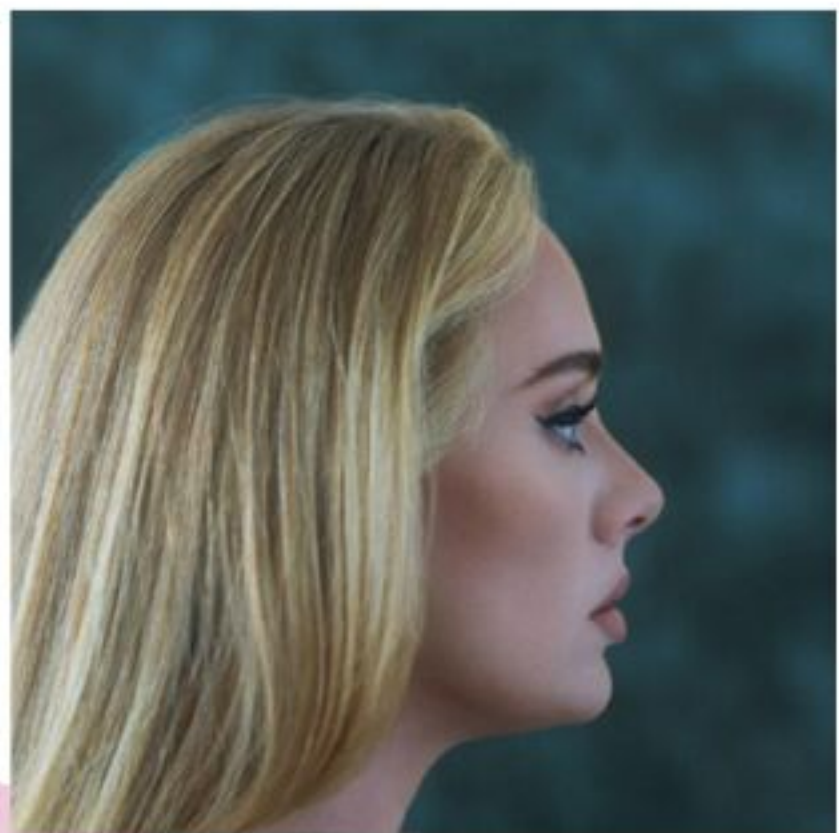
Álvaro Díaz Moves Reggaeton Forward

RAPPER ÁLVARO Díaz has been a figure in reggaeton for years, and this year his profile got a bit of a bump when he co-wrote several tracks on Rauw Alejandro’s album *Vice Versa*. Díaz’s music has often been driven by alternative sounds, and lately the industry has started moving toward his eclectic aesthetic. His new album, *Felicilandia*, exudes a playfully mokey vision. “Babysita </3” goes from acoustic tune to experimental R&B, while “Close Friends” and “Llori Pari,” featuring Feid and Tainy, have an endearing bittersweetness — reflecting his concept for an album about “a place where sad kids can go to be happy.” **JULYSSA LOPEZ**

ADELE’S RETURN TO GLORY

The wait for ‘30’ was worth it – the singer’s fourth album is her best ever By ROB SHEFFIELD

MUMMY’S BEEN having a lot of big feelings recently,” Adele announces early on in *30*. Hands up – who’s surprised? This is Adele, after all. She was born with big feelings, and ever since the day she first stepped into a recording studio, she’s been

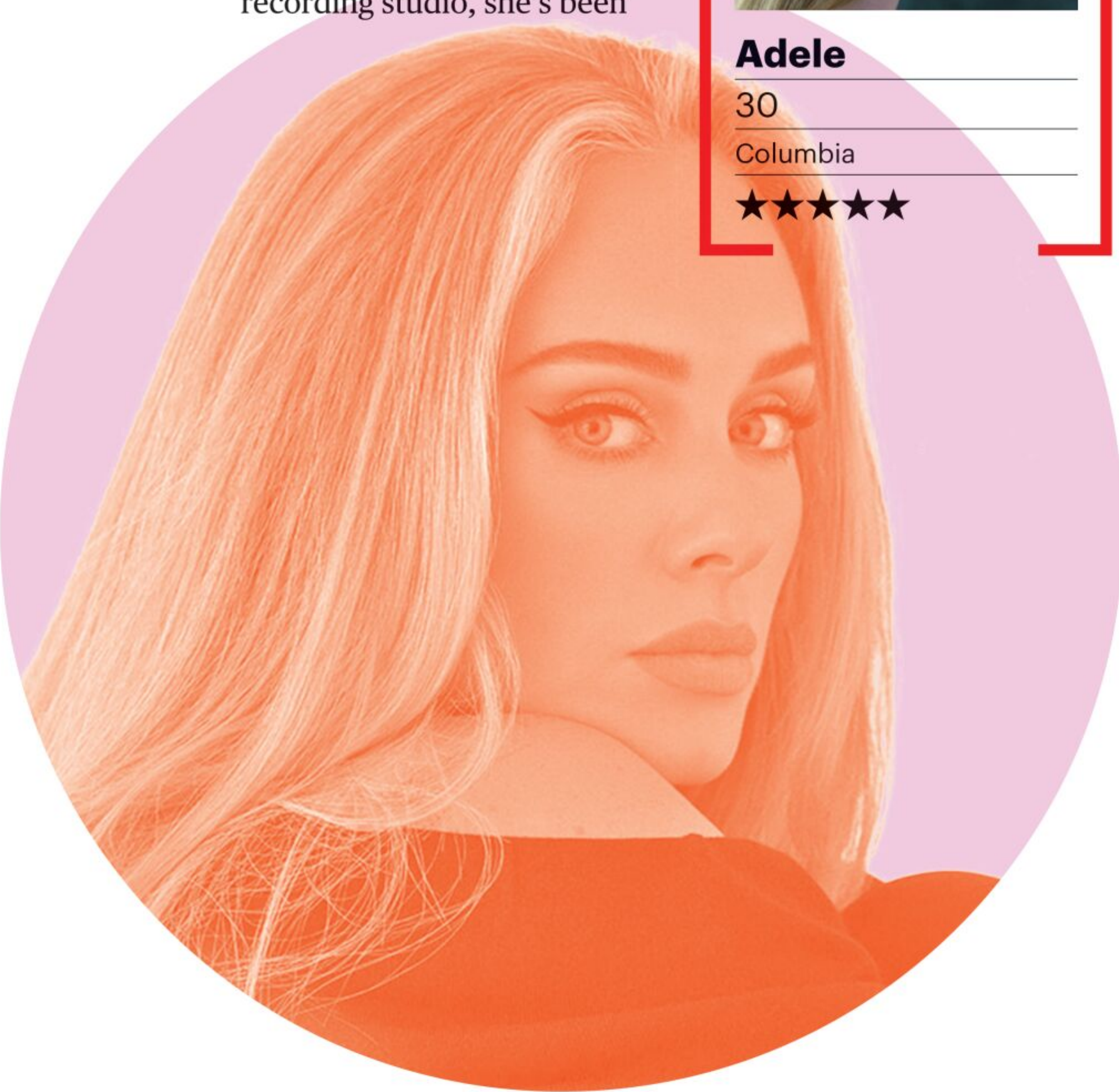


Adele

30

Columbia

★★★★★



brilliant at sharing them with the world. If you were expecting this woman’s divorce album to be a smooth ride, you’re in the wrong place.

Adele has never sounded more ferocious than she does on *30* – more alive to her own feelings, more virtuosic at shaping them into songs in

the key of her own damn life. It’s her toughest, most powerful album yet. She travels her own Via Dolorosa, walking a treacherous path of heartache, motherhood, boozy despair, and loneliness.

This is Adele’s first album since the collapse of her marriage – as she summed it up,

“Divorce, baby.” But it’s also her turning-30 statement, so she’s navigating a host of turbulent emotional transitions. The music is full of time-traveling R&B grooves, going back to old-school Seventies soul for “Hold On” and “Strangers by Nature.” As she sings in the dub-soul trip “Cry Your Heart Out,” “I created this storm/It’s only fair I have to sit in its rain.”

Adele’s voice is a tank division that can tap dance – the more mature she gets as an artist, the more finesse she brings to the microphone, without sacrificing any of her primal firepower. You wouldn’t think it was possible, but her voice just keeps getting stronger. In the hit “Easy on Me,” she pauses mid-song to linger on the first note of “easy” so long you feel like you might pass out, even though you can tell she isn’t breaking a sweat.

“I Drink Wine” is a career highlight that takes inspiration from Elton John. She grapples with feelings so fierce, she can’t share them with anyone except the mirror, the couch, the second or third empty bottle of the night, a gospel choir, and a planet full of sentient humans wired to every tremble of her voice. She goes for wild-ass humor as she sings, “When I was a child every single thing could blow my mind/Soaking it all up for fun, but now I only soak up wine.”

Adele hits new highs in “To Be Loved,” a vocal fireworks display with just a piano to guide her. She breaks down and admits, “Let it be known that I cried for you.” And then punches the word “known” over and over until it gushes blood. It’s an exhilarating moment – like the rest of the album, it’s the sound of a woman fighting her way out of an emotional crisis. All over *30*, you can hear her sense of triumph that she made it all the way through. Hello, from the other side. **R**

FROM TOP: SIMON EMMETT; KEN HANSEN

Quick Hits

Ten new albums you need to know about now



Anuel AA Las Leyendas Nunca Mueren Real Hasta la Muerte		ANUEL A+ The Puerto Rican rapper's third album is full of on-brand swagger while also displaying a new maturity, rekindling his OG trapero flame without turning his back on pop or the club.	★★★★☆
Neil Young and Crazy Horse Barn Reprise		YOUNG AT HEART Young is lovestruck one minute, incensed over the state of man the next. But those sturdy melodies, scalding guitars, and sweet Crazy Horse harmonies never let him down.	★★★★☆
Alicia Keys Keys RCA		SOUL QUEEN Keys' latest is a double LP. The first disc shows her total mastery of the pop form, from Seventies soul to Nat King Cole. Disc Two brings it into the present, with guests like Swae Lee and Khalid.	★★★★☆
Tierra Whack Rap? Interscope		MOUNTAIN OF SOUND An astonishing — at times overwhelming — four-album, 47-track, two-and-a-half-hour release from the avant-garde producer, envisioning a world beyond identity and genre.	★★★★☆
Monsta X The Dreaming BMG		SWEET DREAM With many K-pop artists leaning toward rap, this internationally ascendant crew draws on vintage boy-band sounds on an album that's as fine-tuned as a pop record could be.	★★★★☆
Alison Krauss and Robert Plant Raise the Roof Rounder		TOGETHER AGAIN The bluegrass icon and Led Zep legend had a surprise hit with 2007's <i>Raising Sand</i> . Their second LP has a similar beauty and mystery with covers of Calexico, Merle Haggard, and others.	★★★★☆
Lumineers Brightside Dualtone		HAPPIER TRAILS This Colorado duo remain masters of arena-roots music. Their latest won't surprise anyone, but its upbeat feel and finely wrought prettiness will satisfy Luministas for sure.	★★★★☆
Sting The Bridge A&M		BROAD BRIDGE The spiritually determined tone of Sting's latest is shaped by the pandemic. There are moments that'll sate Policeheads, along with jazz touches, folk storytelling, and an Otis Redding reading.	★★★★☆
Snoop Dogg ...Presents the Algorithm Def Jam		PACK LEADER Snoop wants to build a bond between Gen Z and oldheads on his first album as a Def Jam exec, curating a set of new artists and vets. It'd be nice if more of his lovable self came through.	★★★★☆

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UPDATE

OLD SOUNDS AND FRESH STORIES

Two excellent indie folk artists tell their restless New York stories

IN THE decade since Anaïs Mitchell's last record, the Vermont singer-songwriter created the eight-times-Tony-winning musical *Hadestown* and joined supergroup Bonny Light Horseman. Her new self-titled LP extends the murky, revelatory folk of the latter, with wistful reflections on the passing of time and free-falling in love. "I want

Anaïs Mitchell
Anaïs Mitchell
★★★★☆

Aoife O'Donovan
Age of Apathy
★★★★☆

everything I want," she sings on the spellbinding piano ballad "Brooklyn Bridge," turning a late-night cab ride into something holy. The best song on the latest from fellow New England-raised folkie Aoife O'Donovan is also a meditation on traversing NYC. "B61," a tune about finding love, however temporary, in Red Hook, Brooklyn, is just one of several stunning moments of textured roots music on her first solo collection since 2016. Amid gentle piano and fluttering guitar, O'Donovan meditates on road-tripping to Neil Young ("Age of Apathy"), finds deep meaning in a rescued bird ("Sister Starling"), and collapses time on "What Do You Want From Yourself?," a title that sums up this album's self-searching power.

JONATHAN BERNSTEIN

FROM TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: STEPHEN J. COHEN/GETTY IMAGES; SCOTT DUDERSON/GETTY IMAGES; CHRISTOPHER POLK/NBC/ NBCU PHOTO BANK/GETTY IMAGES; DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS/WIREIMAGE; GUS STEWART/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES